

*Steve Morse*STAFF COMMENTS
ON SAN MATEO COUNTY MIDCOASTSIDE WASTEWATER PROGRAM

MARCH 17, 1976

I am Steve Morse, Associate Staff Engineer of BASSA. My comments tonight are supplementary material to that distributed in the Public Hearing packet and will cover three areas:

1. An update on information presented in the Public Hearing packet.
2. A statement by BASSA staff related to the four questions in the Public Hearing packet.
3. A statement by BASSA staff on options available to BASSA as a result of this Public Hearing.

Update

The Midcoastside has occupied considerable attention of BASSA over the past several years and, especially, over the last several months. We have attempted through our Agency to assist the Sewer Authority Midcoastside (SAM) to obtain its desired clean water grant; have commented on and responded to various SAM actions in an attempt to strengthen SAM's viability; and have provided staff assistance in technical, institutional and administrative areas. BASSA has also maintained close surveillance over SAM's actions and progress to assure timely implementation of the subregional wastewater management plan. This was done in consideration of the possibility of BASSA being required to assume responsibility to construct and operate water quality control facilities in the Midcoastside under Sections 16681 and 16682 of the California Water Code. We have seen SAM to be proceeding, but falling behind, in meeting BASSA and Regional Board schedules. For example, while meeting institutional requirements, a time schedule recently submitted by SAM is incomplete

but is a good start. Additionally, SAM has yet to submit a Step 2 grant application.

The SAM appeal for increased grant funding will be heard before the State Water Resources Control Board tomorrow morning. The State Board decision will be available to be considered with this Public Hearing record.

The State Board staff on March 10, 1976, commented that the SAM Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement was inadequate for grant application purposes. While this casts doubts on SAM's ability to proceed, the matter has been scheduled for the next SAM Board meeting of Monday, March 22, 1976.

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I would now like to present BASSA's staff position on the four Public Hearing questions:

1. Is the proposed project needed? Is the capacity adequate?

Mr. Scholar, of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, has amply demonstrated the need for a subregional solution to the wastewater management problem in the Midcoastside. I would like to again call attention to:

- a. The Montara and Granada Plants are discharging into areas designated of Special Biological Significance, and must cease and move their discharges.
- b. The Granada Plant is only providing primary treatment and is located on an earthquake fault.
- c. All plants are either violating or threatening to violate various Regional Board permits, not all of which are currently correctable, especially for the Montara and Granada Plants.
- d. The Half Moon Bay Plant is termed "interim" and eventually according to the Project Report, would require over one million dollars upgrading that may not be available through federal and

state grant funds at a later date if fo stalled now.

- e. The subregion will save \$50,000 per year, according to the Project Report, under a consolidated facility with consolidated operations and maintenance.

Question: Is the capacity adequate? Based on information currently available to BASSA staff, it appears that the current design capacity of 1.8 MGD may be adequate for the future 10 to 15 years. While the State Board grant regulations are restricting grant limits to spread grant monies availability Statewide through low population estimates, it appears that various pressures may cause or allow the Midcoastside to grow faster than the remainder of San Mateo County. Other plant capacity increases may be justified by recreation and tourism, but BASSA has yet to see these needs documented.

Question: Is the current proposal of SAM implementable? BASSA staff believes that the proposed Alternate F--regardless of funding or capacity--to be the most viable plan for the Midcoastside. Other alternatives could preclude a cost-effective subregional solution. Investment by local agencies in Alternate A (or the "bare bones" version) would not solve the long-term problems and would perpetuate three small plants--a "band-aid" solution. While SAM has taken a hard-line, "all or nothing" stand for full current "design" capacity, it must be recognized that a compromise might be in order.

Question: Will the Midcoastside finance the needed water quality improvements? The answer to this question is still unclear to BASSA staff, as only cost data by jurisdiction is available and has yet to be related to the taxpayer or revenue and financial plans. This financial information is probably of greatest concern to BASSA staff in that if the Midcoastside does not consolidate and accept grant monies, Granada and

Montara Sanitary Districts will have to pay \$220,000 and \$104,000 more local funds, respectively, for necessary improvements. Also, as cited before, the operations and maintenance requirements are higher by \$50,000 under a three-plant scheme.

Question: Is SAM willing and capable to implement a subregional water quality management program? If not, why not? If not, who? SAM appears to be starting well. At the first meeting, staff observed Board action conducted in an efficient, businesslike approach. It is also apparent that the Board is well versed on the subregional wastewater situation in the Midcoastside. SAM's Manager has actively pursued and represented Board direction, and they have successfully concluded or are about to conclude business items that have been left dangling for months; for example, the Final EIR, oceanographic work, institutional arrangements, etc.

On the other hand, there is still evidence of mistrust between the agencies that prevailed over the past several years and which was evident in the development of their Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement containing many caveats and local agency safeguards. The State ^{Water Resources} Board staff has found the JEPA to be deficient to proceed with grant application. This could effectively bring SAM to a halt. However, as stated before, this is an agenda item for their Monday meeting. Considering the State comments and most Midcoastside actions, it is optimistic to expect the amendment of the Joint Powers Agreement on Monday.

Staff finds that there are six agencies that could be designated lead agency for the Midcoastside--BASSA, SAM, CSSA, Half Moon Bay, Granada Sanitary District, and Montara Sanitary District. Of the six, only the first two appear viable. You have already heard the pros and cons of SAM. BASSA has the authority under law to step in and assume responsibility for lead agency where the local agencies have not demonstrated

a firm commitment for construction and operation of water quality control facilities, and where a group of local agencies does not wish to proceed or cannot proceed. Staff believes BASSA can provide a viable, realistic lead agency for the project.

① At this time in preparing to designate the lead agency, staff believes the BASSA Board has three courses of action to consider and resolve following receipt of testimony:

1. Designate BASSA as the lead agency under the powers of BASSA law.
2. Designate SAM as the lead agency with strict conditions to insure timely actions and implementation by SAM.
3. As a variation to #2, designate SAM the lead agency with conditions that BASSA take an arbitrator role to find a compromise suitable to all and to ensure efficient, effective wastewater management on the Midcoastside.

You may expect diligent staff effort to facilitate your decision of the lead agency at your April seventh Board meeting.